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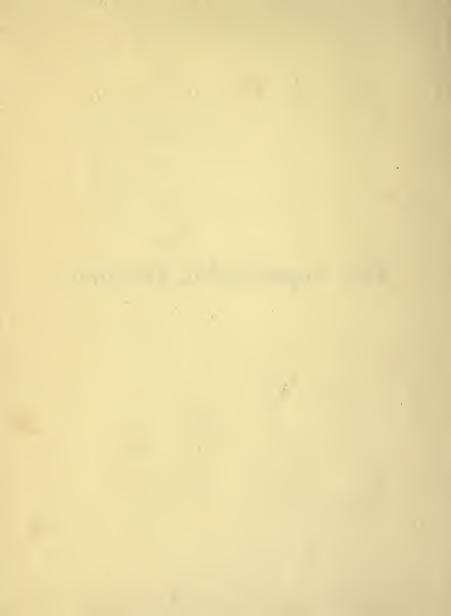
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The Imperishable Perfume



The Imperishable Perfume

with other Translations from the French

and Poems

By Emily Howson Taylor

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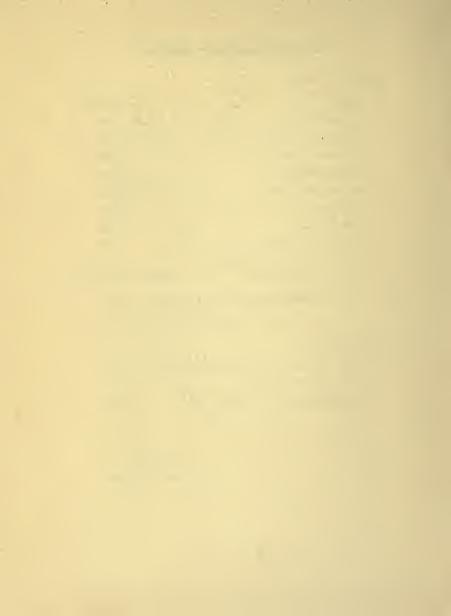
Thanks are given to the Editor of the Westminster Gazette for permission to reprint Icarus.

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The Imperishable Perfume.

(From the French of Leconte de Lisle)

When the rose of Lahore which the sun brought to birth,

Has filled drop by drop with its odorous soul The phial of gold or of crystal or earth, On the heat of the sand one may scatter the whole.

The vessel which held it enclosed—a strict shrine— The waves and the sea might o'erwhelm, but in vain!

It keeps, though 'tis broken, its odour divine, And fragrant the fortunate dust will remain.

Then since through my heart wounded never to heal,

Celestial liquor, 'tis thus thou dost steal,
Unspeakable love for her,—passion and strife,
I'll count my wound blest and forgive her the crime!
Beyond human measure and infinite time,
My heart is embalmed with the odour of life!

The Fountain.

(From the French of Philippe Desportes)

Cool is this fount, its waters flowing sweet,
All silver-hued, have love within their sound;
The turf is green and tender all around,
And alder-trees give shelter from the heat.
The leaves beneath the breath of Zephyr blow—
A lover sighing in this pleasant place;
At noon the sun pursues his fiery race—
The earth is rent asunder by the glow.
Passer, by toil of the long way distressed,
Burnt with the heat and by thy thirst oppressed,
Stay, since a kindly fate has led thee here.
Rest, pleasant rest, thy body will renew,
Shade and fresh wind thy fever will subdue,
And in the fount thy thirst will disappear.

Icarus.

(From the French of Philippe Desportes)

Icarus fell here, so young and yet so brave,
Who to the height of heaven once dared to fly.
Here, stripped and wingless, fell he from the sky,
Leaving all bold hearts envious of his grave.
O blesséd work of glorious ecstasy
Which draws such profit from so slight a pain!
O blest misfortune which so full of gain
Has changed defeat to immortality!
So new a road his youth did not surprise,
Power failed him, not audacious enterprise;
The fairest of the stars became his doom.
He died the follower of a lofty quest,
Heaven his desire, the sea his final rest:
Is there a greater aim, a richer tomb?

The Invitation.

(From the French of Théodore de Banville)

Come, throw a straw hat on thy dusky hair.

Before the hour of noise and work and care

We'll see the morning rise the hills above,

Pluck in the meads the blossoms that we love.

Where the stream breaks in many a rippling fold,

Pale water-lilies lean their cups of gold;

Faint in the fields and orchards wide and long

Lingers an echo of the shepherds' song,

And, shaking for our joy an odorous wing,

The morning airs, like sisters wandering,

Already while thou smilest throw to thee

Scents of pink peach and flowering apple-tree.

The Flute.

(From the French of André Chénier)

Oft through my mind this tender memory slips,
How he would lay the flute upon my lips,
Laugh, place me near his heart, upon his knee,
Call me his rival, more adept than he.
He taught my lips untutored and unsure
To utter breath harmonious and pure,
Took my young fingers in his hands of skill,
Raised them and dropped them twenty times at
will,

Teaching them thus, though feeble still to learn, Deftly to touch the boxwood holes in turn.

Song.

(From the French of Maeterlinck)

If he ever came again
What am I to say?
Tell him that I looked for him,
Till I could not stay.

If he questions me again,
Does not know my face?
He may suffer—speak to him
In a sister's place.

If he asks me where you are,
What must I reply?
Give him just my golden ring,
Do not tell him why.

If he wonders that the room
Is tenanted no more,
Show him the extinguished lamp,
And the open door.

If he asks me what you did Ere you fell asleep? Then—oh! tell him that I smiled Fearing he might weep.

Dawn.

(From the French of Vielé-Griffin)

Clear and pale before the day
The Dawn awakes, begins to lay
Her delicate kiss, now here, now there,
On the folds of the hills shines everywhere,
Pallid like one who does not dare.

Then they say: The day is in dread That such a herald is all he can find; He hesitates and he lags behind, For he knows not what is alive or dead; The day is in dread.

But the dawn has blushed with a shaméd air, Like one who fears but at last will dare, And drawing herself to her slender height Has pushed back the double helm of night; Behind her, yielding beneath the blow, The mist now wavers and turns to go. The nymphs rush out in one bright throng And wheel together from south to north, Driving the whole of the sky along: Like the song of a lyre the sun springs forth!

The Death of Mademoiselle de Limeuil, 15—.

"Julien, soon I shall be dead;
Come and stand beside my bed!
And until I pass away
Take your violin and play.

Play me once *The Swiss Defeat*—Make it very clear and sweet!
'All is lost,' it goes—and there
Very piteous make the air.

'Tis the last I ask of you—
Play that four or five times through!''
She turned her face the other side:
"All is lost," she said, and died.

A Lady carving her Name on a Tree.

The morning is so silent and so grey
That I have heard along the forest way
Nothing but my own footfall, scarce have seen
A timid bird flutter amid the green.
My dog is walking with me; even he
Has felt the hush and follows quietly.
Secluded thus from outer gaze and speech,
May I not carve my name upon this beech,
Cut in the bark the letters with my blade
And leave it a memorial in the glade?
Then my beloved passing here may see
My name engraved upon the forest tree,
And, pausing gladly on the grassy floor,
Rejoice that there his love had been before.

Words for Music.

O virgin rose,
Yesterday but a bud to my caress,
The wind has come upon thee merciless
And blown thy leaves to long forgetfulness,
O virgin rose!

O virgin rose,
Yesterday all the summer lay in thee,
Locked in thy heart. Alas that thou should'st be
A few far-scattered leaves—a memory,

O virgin rose!

Violins at Night.

Now the long daylight nears its end, And here green twisted alleys bend, Fair shelters from the dusty street, Fragrant and dim in dark and heat; And here the first sweet notes begin At touch of flute and violin.

Subtler than words, those sounds express
The very heart of loveliness,
The gift that age to age has sent—
Gay speech and friendship and content,
Beauty that is and long has been
A dweller in these shades of green.

Amid these ordered lights that gleam Against the trees, above the stream, The airy music grows and fades, Becomes an echo in the glades, Or, soaring to some rapturous height, Passes again—a mist of night.

The Music Room.

The wind blows lightly on the grass,
(O joy of Spring! O joy of Spring!)
The orchard blossoms float and pass
On delicate wing,
Or pause against the window glass.

The sunbeams glide along the wall,
(O joy of Spring! O joy of Spring!)
From hue to hue they flit and fall,
Or vanishing fling
A glow of memory over all.

Radiant within the chamber bright,
(O joy of Spring! O joy of Spring!)
Musicians touch with fingers light
The silvery string
To melody beyond delight.

Like those fair blooms that float to death,
(O joy of Spring! O joy of Spring!)
The music fades—a sudden breath,
A tremulous thing
That scarcely knoweth what it saith.

A Winter Sunrise.

Darkness past, and storm and wrack,
The winter day comes slowly back,
And the sky fresh coloured glows
Green and amethyst and rose,
Rose and green and amethyst,
Clear above the windy mist.
Up to the sun's early fire,
Rises the smoke in a thin spire,
On the blue sky like a stain
That golden glory to attain.
And the trees that in the rout
Of midnight flung their arms about,
Now in fainter ecstasy
Sway and sway unceasingly.

To Willows.

Willows that blew in wind and sun, This wintry war is almost done,— And ye who bore such chill delays, Such weary nights and heavy days, Shall find again a long release And quiet stand in hours of peace.

And will it be so small a thing When every thrush begins to sing, When every day the sky is blue, And gentler airs encircle you,—And ye behold the Spring begun, Willows that blew in wind and sun?

The year's last day fades dim and far, And now behold the year's last star, Which like a bright point flames and glows, High in the faint ethereal rose, The mist a clinging shroud has spun— Willows that blew in wind and sun.

The moon to wider compass grows, As if her crescent would enclose, Behind your branches shining clear, All joys that lie within the year, All radiant hours that are to run—Willows that blew in wind and sun.

Anemone.

When March winds rise in sudden haste And blow unchecked along the waste, When all across the changing sky The gusty clouds are driving high; When the sap springs in every tree, Thy tender, rose-flushed flower we see, Anemone, anemone.

In many a hollow of the wood,
Where black and gaunt the bushes stood,
Sprung from the dead earth we may find
The very spirit of the wind—
If such a mighty wind can be
Contained in a frail flower like thee,
Anemone, anemone.

If we could keep—not just a part—But all the Spring within our heart,
Then would the sky be always clear,
The thrush would sing throughout the year,
And thou its fadeless star wouldst be,
O flower as great as the great sea—
Anemone, anemone.

Lilac.

Here bloom, an ever new delight, The purple lilac and the white; Ethereal as a foaming sea, Their blossoms move in ecstasy, As if the Spring with all its grace Were gathered in one fragrant place. Right to the door the lilacs grow, On either side, a guardian row, And on the pathway every day The people walk, the children play. And some may see the lilacs high, And some, no doubt, will pass them by-While I—there's just one thing I miss In such a wondrous world as this-Ah love, that I could share with thee The glory of the lilac tree!

Chrysanthemums.

Too swiftly night is falling on the year,
And all the mirth and pageantry must close—
And little now remains but here and here
The shadow of some fair forgotten rose.
Yet, as a song is sweetest at the last,
So now the walks appear supremely decked
With bright, enduring flowers that still reflect
In glory all the glories that are past.

Here upon the garden bed,
Pink and yellow, brown and red,
In a gay, heroic band,
Firm against the storm they stand,
Or to meet the faint sun's graces
Turn the welcome of their faces.
Like the last hues of the day,
Bold yet delicate are they,
And the sullen hours go by
Regal in such livery.

The Child Awakes.

Impatient at the end of day
The child will throw his toys away
And say, "How dark! I cannot play."

And so he sleeps—and wakes again: The sun shines on the counterpane, And all the room is clear and plain.

Soon he sees everything he knows— The flowers upon the wall in rows, All fastened up with coloured bows;

The corner where the curtain drops, The bottles with their silver tops, The little clock that never stops.

How nice to lie awake and think About those flowers all blue and pink, To count them all without a wink:—

Until his eyes no longer keep Their watch—but with oblivion deep Close in the quiet world of sleep.

A Prisoner.

God, who has given to me a heart and brain, Knows how I languish here in helpless pain. If heart and brain unused may rust and die—

If these—why may not I?

Here waiting I can watch between the bars
The amazing glory of the sun and stars,
The thousand wondrous changes in the sky—
Yet ever here am I.

The little store I have of meat and drink—Why not refuse it? Yes, why not? I think 'Twould only be a little agony—And yet still here am I.

Death is so easy! Just a little skill,
A moment's trick, an effort of the will:
My spirit through ethereal space would fly
Lightly—yet here am I.

What holds me back? Hope can it be, or fear? I cannot tell. I only know that here
This poor, tormented body still must lie—
Enduring here am I.

Songs.

I.

When Spring is here my love will come again, I shall forget the long, dark weeks before; I shall not linger doubting in the lane, Or with slow hand fear to unbar the door.

And thinking, thinking, pleasure grows to pain,
And pain a comrade fairer than delight,—
Sweeter than roses drooping after rain
Or singing that grows faint upon the night.

II.

How could I know she would come to-night,
With her little feet in the cruel snow?
I would have flooded the house with light.
How could I know?

How could I know she would find my door
And weary of knocking, turn and go?
I would have held her for evermore.
How could I know?

A Dedication.

Trusting to nothing but Thy grace,
Here, Lord, beneath Thy hands I place
Those whom I love—a pledge to Thee
To guard until eternity;
My work, my books, my daily care,
My morning thought, my evening prayer,
My happiness for Thee to keep,
The secret of my long last sleep:
These, since Thy pity understands,
I place beneath Thy hands.

A Damascus Legend.

This is the story men repeat
Of a thing that passed in Damascus street.

A woman was walking along the road: Fire and water were all her load.

- "Nay," said a monk, as she hurried past,
- "Where are you going to-night so fast?
- "And why do you carry a load so dire— In one hand water, in one hand fire"?
- "The fire is to burn up Heaven," said she,
- "With the water Hell shall quenchéd be.
- "Heaven will I burn and Hell will I slake
 That God may be loved for His own dear sake."

A Child's Hymn.

Thy Everlasting Arms are spread So lovingly around my head That I, a little child, have laid Myself within them unafraid: And scarcely need I say to Thee, "My God, I pray Thee, care for me."

And yet I say when night is done, When once again appears the sun; And when again the daylight flies And blackness covers up the skies; When in the dark I cannot see— "O Lord, I pray Thee, care for me."

Lest I should fall from Thy embrace Or miss the kindness of Thy face, Or lose the pleasures I have had, The joys of God that make me glad, I say untiringly to Thee, "O God, I pray Thee, care for me."

And every day, as I grow old,
May Thine eternal arms enfold
My head, my heart, my life, my all!
O hold me closer lest I fall,
Lest I forget to say to Thee,
"O God, I pray Thee, care for me."

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The Dayspring.

As if some vine in dusk and silence grown, Budded and bore, illustrious and alone, He, David's Son, appeared unto His own.

Before that wintry daybreak had begun, He came in darkness, the triumphant sun, And in that dawning earth and heaven were one.

Sing, heaven, with all your countless company; Sing, earth, and sing again in ecstasy, Sing, and behold the Dayspring from on high.

Who would not tread to-night with happy feet Mountain or moor or chill unfriendly street, If he could hear such music strong and sweet?

Who would not face the bitter, piercing blast, Or hail, or snow, or sharp sleet driving fast, If he could find Immanuel at last!

Pilgrim Shepherds.

(First Shepherd).

I who am old, with winter clinging round me, Have journeyed with my friends and joy with them,

For I descending to the grave have found Thee, Thou royal House of Bread, O Bethlehem.

(Second Shepherd).

And I whose flocks lie safe in verdant meadows
That northward slope unto Jerusalem,
I, strong, unwearied, press amid the shadows

That guard thy rocky stable, Bethlehem.

(Third Shepherd).

I, but a boy, within whose heart still lingersThe face of God, the flash of heavenly gem,Have brought these wintry blossoms in my fingersTo thine immortal Babe, O Bethlehem.

(Chorus of Shepherds).

O Rose, that could not tarry till the Spring,

A hard time dost Thou choose for blossoming,

A garden bare and cold;

O Lamb that trod celestial pastures sweet,

The earth is rough and thorny to Thy feet,

Thine is a dreary fold!

O Star that fairest shone of all the sky,

Heaven held Thee in its bright infinity,

Yet could not hold Thee long;

O Child that art the flower and crown of joy,

Thou hast no playmate but a shepherd boy,

No pastime but our song.

A Carol.

It fell upon a winter night,

Beneath the frosty sky,

That Mary rode to Bethlehem

With Joseph walking by.

- "I fain would find a resting-place," Said Mary all weary,
- "Good Joseph, is there in the inn
 No room for you and me?"

Up to the crowded inn they came (All chill the night and late)—

"Kind porter, pray you, is there room?"
Said Joseph at the gate.

The busy porter shook his head:
"No room have we at all!

I can but give a bed of straw Within the oxen stall." O how that manger drear became
A sun of golden light,
And how the oxen gazed in awe
When Christ was born that night!
And how the willing shepherds ran
Obedient to the call,
And brought Him o'er the frozen grass
Some cherries and a ball.

The star that on the stable shone
And on the shepherds' fold,
Brought the wise men with frankincense,
With gifts of myrrh and gold—
The frankincense for God's dear Son,
A priestly offering;
The myrrh was for that cross of shame,
The gold for Christ the King.

The Waits.

From all the country round we've come,

By many roads we've been;

We've come to let the old year out,

To let the new year in.

The old year brought you grief and wrong,

Perhaps the new will bring a song—

Noel! Noel!

The new will bring a song.

Our gardens are all desolate,
Our fields are bare and cold,
Our trees are waving dreary arms
Above the dreary mould;
And yet the rose that died in rain
Another spring will bloom again.
Noel! Noel!

The rose will bloom again.

Good sirs, we're standing at your door
Upon the snow so white,
And we have made this simple song
To comfort you to-night.
The old year brought you grief of heart,

The old year brought you grief of heart, Perhaps the new will heal the smart,

Noel! Noel!

The new will heal the smart.

So lift the latch and welcome us,

Oh! do not turn away,

For many a weary mile we've seen

Since breaking of the day.

The old year brought you grief and fears,

Perhaps the new will dry your tears,—

Noel! Noel!

The new will dry your tears.

For the New Year.

Passionate hands importunate—
They beat against the door of fate,
Forgetting in that struggle sore
'Tis God who waits behind the door,
That He, Who knows all, understands
The beating of these hands.

Poor, restless heart, that would not lose A crumb of joy, but still would choose Its wandering pleasure here and here—Upon the threshold of the year God gracious stands, and none can part Him and this restless heart.

Through summer's heat and winter's cold Israel He bare in days of old,
And, knowing all, remembereth
Our life is but a dream, a breath:—
Wherefore His tenderness commands
This heart, these wilful hands.

In the Resurrection Garden.

Scarcely the day breaks or the stars pass,
(Through the grey garden chill blows the wind.)
There is no path in the tangled grass:

What would ye find?

We seek a Rose that lives and was dead;
Pale, pale it was in the Paschal night:
At break of day we shall find it red,
Thornless and bright.

Will ye not wait till the dews are dry?

(Through the grey garden chill blows the wind.)

Look! the dim branches stir and sigh.

What would ye find?

While darkness lingers we seek a Vine;
Withered and bare it was to the root.
At break of day it will bud and shine
With leaf and fruit.

Song to Liberty.

Not for thee the flag of war
Flaming in the nations' sight,
Stained and spoiled by many a scar,
But a banner virgin white!
Write upon it, We are free—
Take thy standard, Liberty!

Not for thee the tyrant's call
Echoing loud across the earth,
But a voice that speaks to all,
Sweeter than an angel's mirth,
Stronger than the mighty sea—
This thy voice, O Liberty!

Thine no cry of party fight,
"Rich for rich and poor for poor"—
But a cry by day and night
Till the message is secure—
"Freedom for the men to be"—
This thy watchword, Liberty!

Thine no glittering host that goes
Proudly up the shouting street,
But a scattered crowd that grows,
Grows through danger and defeat,
Follows struggling after thee—
These thy followers, Liberty!

The Victorious Spirit.

Being so weak and often far from light,

I journey gropingly and often say—

"Can this be all—this stumbling, struggling way,
This barren search, this wandering in the night?"

And then my spirit answers me at last,

Nor ever fails: "Bruised as thou art and blind,

I still press on, secure that I shall find

All things revealed when time and death are past."

Boat-Song of the Bois-Brûles Tribe.

(Translated from the French)

At Nantes, in the prisons there, Lies a poor prisoner, gai, faluron, falurette, gai, faluron, dondé.

The gaoler's daughter—only she That prisoner again will see, gai . . .

She has brought him wine and meat, Meat and wine, that he may eat, gai . . .

The girl is young and she is trim, And she has loosed his feet for him, gai . . .

Very swift and light is he—
He throws himself into the sea, gai . . .

- "On women may God's blessing fall— The gaoler's daughter above all," gai . . .
- "If I come back to Nantes," he said,
 The gaoler's daughter I will wed," gai,
 faluron, falurette, gai, faluron, dondé.

The Dining-Room.

(From the French of Francis Jammes)

There is a chest, now dull and grey,
Which heard what my grand-aunts used to say;
My grandfather's voice it must have heard
And caught from my father many a word.
These things the chest does not forget.
Who thinks it is silent? That's absurd,
For I talk with it yet.

There is a cuckoo of wood as well,
Where its voice is I cannot tell;
I would not ask where for anything!
Most likely the voice that was in its spring
Is really broken beyond recall,
Like that of the dead, for good and all.

There is an ancient sideboard, too,
Where a scent of wax and jam abides;
Meat and bread and ripe pears besides.
It is a servant good and true,
Honest and trusty through and through.

And people have come to me in shoals Who didn't believe in these little souls; And I smile that they think I am living alone When the visitors entering one by one, Say to me, as they often do, Well, how are you?

On the Death of the Master Poet.

(From the French of Vielé-Griffin)

If we said to thee, Master dear!
The light is breaking;
Here is the same pale herald of day.
Master, the window is open here,
The dawn comes up by the eastern way,
And day will appear!
You would say, I dream, I am not yet waking.

If we said to thee, Master, here we are, Living and strong,—if we said, As last night we came to thy dwelling-place; We have come laughing, here we are, Seeking a smile and a close embrace,—They would answer, The Master is dead!

Flowers from my terrace high, Flowers like those that lie upon friendship's page,

Why these flowers?
Here, a part of our souls the low melody
Turns and falls in the wind,

Just as these leaves are whirling and falling in showers—

Here are we still living in shame and rage And raving to thee who art deaf and blind.





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